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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

WRITING IN THE DARK:
CHA(I)N(G)ING ME ANINGS

BY

© SUSAN WALSH

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
(FALL, 1990)

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Susan Walsh

9309-Morinville Drive
Box 2278
Morinville, Alberta
T0G 1P0

Date: July 23, 1990

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SUBMITTED BY SUSAN WALSH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER'S OF EDUCATION.

Dr. Margaret Iveson

Dr. Jan Jagodzinski

Dr. Shirley Neuman

Date: April 27, 1990

Dedication

This work is dedicated to Casey, Erin and Bill Pritchard,

to Patrick and Jannett Walsh,

and to all those who are dis-covering the courage to follow their hearts.

Abstract

A process of journeying. A journey of processing. This thesis is an attempt to question structure as it encases our knowing&being. Through blurring the boundaries that customarily distinguish creative&scholarly, personal&public writing, I have attempted to dis-cover spaces of difference, spaces of silence, spaces of knowing&being not commonly given credence in our daily lives. Does the structure of language structure our consciousness? How can we become critical of what we accept as transparent, of what we take for granted? The play with traditional scholarly writing in this thesis is symbolic of my reaching beyond the unquestioned structure of my knowing&being, my attempt to explore the (metaphorical) "spaces around words."

Language, customarily assumed to be neutral and disembodied, is problematized by feminist writers who challenge representations of "the feminine" in traditional discourse. Power relations inherent in such language use is explored. Feminine difference is examined. Psychoanalytic tenets of castration and lack are countered with notions of abundance and openness. Can we create spaces where women can write their own subjectivities, can connect with their bodies, can speak their experiences? What is the shape and the sound of the language used?

This work is deeply autobiographical. My attempts to connect with the the writings of feminists and post-structuralists exemplify what Christ (1987) calls scholarship with a difference, scholarship that emerges from "an ethos of eros and empathy" (p. 58). Objectivity in academic work is questioned: the distinction between subjective&objective dissolved. The thesis is a set of essays that interweave and resonate back and forth. Various sections include a process of understanding the work of French feminists Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva, a revision of dualistic thought, an investigation of mothering and an examination of student-teacher relationships. Learning is not sequential nor neatly ordered: it is a *process* of interactions and connections. Through this writing, I intertwine process&product in working towards validation of alternative ways of being&knowing.

Preface

weave

1. *trans.* To form or fabricate . . . by interlacing yarns or other filaments of a particular substance in a continuous web; to manufacture in a loom by crossing the threads or yarns called respectively the warp and the weft. (OED, 1969, p. 239)

The text that follows is a multi-dimensional weaving of questions, thoughts, reflections, readings, writings, experiences, and relationships. Its many *filaments* and *yarns* intertwine on various planes; warps and wefts extend in different directions. It is a complex web of words and spaces . . . with a non-sequential pattern. In a break from traditional thesis form, I have therefore called the various sections "Filaments and Yarns" instead of "Chapters"; a "Table of Contents" infers an emphasis on *content* which is not present in this work. The "Bibliography" has become "Intertextual Weavings." Through the process of writing, I have learned that such a weaving is collaborative work. Come (we)ave with me . . .

Acknowledgements

The process of writing this thesis has been a paradoxical journey of strengthening self as well as connecting with others. "I" is a pronoun of intertextual, interpersonal, interactive weavings, a channel through which a composite of experience speaks. "I" humbly thank those who have suggested readings, lent me books, sparked ideas, accepted me with love and given me pain enough to grow. So many have shared in creating an environment conducive to taking risks and to being creative. I do wish, however, to acknowledge the particular contributions of the following people.

Dr. Marg Iveson, who cared about this work, who constantly encouraged me, who is always open to learning, who reminded me of practical issues, who has taught me to appreciate and to trust feminine leadership in a male-dominated institution.

Dr. Jan Jagodzinski, who gently opened doors for me at exactly the right times, whose ideas inspired me many times to write long into the night, who taught me the valuable depths of silence in teaching and learning, who was patient and understanding.

Dr. Shirley Neuman, whose support I find heartening, who carefully proofread the text, whose insights and questions were refreshing to Marg, Jan, and me who had read and reread this work many times.

Charles Hart and Carl Leggo, who have always believed in me, who read early drafts and shared their steadfast support, whose passion for ideas blended with my own, whose academic excellence is an ongoing inspiration to me.

Patrick and Jannett Walsh, my parents, who love me, who nurtured my inner strength, who taught me to "follow my heart."

Bill Pritchard, my husband, who has worked to understand my need to undertake this journey, who has been patient about the changes it has made in me and in our relationship, who is constantly loving and supportive.

Casey and Erin Pritchard, our daughters, who remind us daily about what is important in this life, who respected their mom's reading and writing time, who have been interested in "the book", who are glad that, for now, it is finally finished.

FILAMENTS AND YARNS

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essaying: knowing&being differently

Experience, though noon auctoritee
Were in this world, is right ynough for me
To speke
The Wife of Bath
(Chaucer, 1975, p. 126)

This text is an exploration of meaning-making. It shows a process of thinking and learning through reading and writing. I do not try to impart information, display mastery of knowledge, but read and write my coming to understand differently. That this is meaning-making, the *process* of being&knowing embedded in personal experience, is a challenge to any knowledge or sense of self that purports to be objective, complete, or truthful in a general way. The notion of a text, indeed knowledge, meaning, and even "self" as finished, polished--as a product ready for consumption--is questioned by my writing. What appears on these pages is never more than a catching of breath in the passage of time. Process with no end . . .

This is the story of becoming an author who is willing to write and read instead of unthinkingly being read and written. I challenge my own habits of sensing, of knowing, of being in the world. The process of thinking through writing is opened and made public--thereby questioning the (hierarchical) privileging of "public," objective and distant forms of writing over those that are more personal and reflective--collapsing a public&private opposition. Peter Abbs notes that we "can only teach from our own being, there is nowhere else to teach from" (1981, p. 495). Autobiographical writing provides a space for critical reflection. A recursive relationship with my own writing creates a rhythm of touching and letting go in a safe space for learning and for transformation, "the re-invention of the self" (Neuman, 1990). It seems that in order to effect

change in the world around us, we must begin inside ourselves, critically examining the taken-for-granted ways that we perceive things. I therefore accept the validity of personal writing as research and believe that I can be a more tolerant and understanding teacher by becoming more conscious of my own learning process, by making personal connections with what I read to make sense of it, by realizing the importance of time&space, difference&similarity, joy&pain in learning.

> The ultimate power of autobiography is that we gain new insights or knowledge. By pulling us out of objectivity or subjectivity a powerful story brings us to a new edge of awareness and pushes us over it. We acknowledge lived experience as complex, ambiguous, and contradictory. . . . Like the objectivist who desires one truth, or the subjectivist who desires an infinite number of truths, research becomes "relegated" when either view is adopted. But life is messy, educational life particularly so. And yet we need to keep close to the messiness so that it doesn't get forgotten. (Brandau, 1998, p. 4)

I believe in an infinite process of becoming; thus the rereading and rewriting of my own experiences are essential, and no attempt is made to distance them or to hide the inconsistencies and the contradictions in my thinking. In The History of Women's Autobiography: From Antiquity to the Present, Jelinek makes some interesting comments.

> Contemporary women are more likely to view [a] sense of being unfinished more positively than earlier generations, who were more easily demoralized by their ambivalence--their divided loyalties between their work and the expected female roles. Today, this struggle continues, but with less self-deprecation. Now it can be condoned as a constructive *process* in becoming a self-affirmed human being. This process of self-discovery, a less than confident self-image, and a feeling of difference may be one explanation for the forms and narrative style of women's autobiographies. They may begin as chronological narratives, since chronology gives a sense of order and control over one's life. But it is soon superseded--usually unconsciously--by interruptions to that safe progression with anecdotes, even out of order, and all kinds of insertions--

> letters, articles, even descriptions by others. . . . **Disjunctive narratives and discontinuous forms are more adequate for mirroring the fragmentation and multidimensionality of women's lives** [emphasis added]. (1986, pp. 187-188).

I am committed to the critical exploration of discourse and of how it structures consciousness&unconsciousness, to a foray into chaos, to the creation of new structures, rhythms perhaps. I have chosen to experiment with academic writing in order to question the spaces that such writing traditionally attempts to cover. Which kinds of knowing&being are re-presented . . . and which are not? What of researching and presenting work as a seamless whole--a logical, linear, sequential product unified by A Question? My knowing&being does not reveal itself to me in this manner. My questions are many, somehow interrelated, continually weaving and tangling themselves. And answers? Conclusions? . . . Shifts in voice and disruption of traditional language use contribute to (a)thesis which is at once creative&scholarly, that dispells illusions of coherence and author(ity), the facade of a product. The text is postmodern in the sense that it attempts to question the borders that separate academic writing from creative writing from journal writing, that separate "theory" and "art" (Goldberg, 1987/1988a; Hutcheon, 1988; Jagodzinski, 1988; Owens, 1983; Ulmer, 1983).

> This postmodern . . . practice interrogates and problematizes, leaving the [reader&writer] no comfortable [reading&writing] position; it is in many ways demanding [text]. It upsets learned notions of the relations between [creative/scholarly, subjective/objective, process/product] by installing conventions of both (which are often taken for granted) and then by investigating the borders along which each can be opened, subverted, altered by the other in new ways. (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 299)

Christ (1987) explores the emergence of scholarship with a difference, feminist scholarship that emphasizes connections between the scholar and what she&he studies instead of separation, that involves a profound investigation of the self and that extends outward to make connections on a larger scale. The illusion of objectivity, the ability to distance or distinguish oneself from what one is studying, is characterized as masculine by Christ. She

discusses object relations theory and the separation of infant from mother: a male child must clearly delineate himself from the mother when he perceives his difference from her while a female child retains a connection because of their likeness. Is it in this fundamental separation that the (illusory) capacity to distance oneself is born? Christ challenges the "ethos of objectivity" in scholarship with an "ethos of eros and empathy."

> The ethos of eros and empathy reminds us that at the root of our scholarship is eros, a passion to connect, the desire to understand the experience of another, the desire to deepen our understanding of ourselves and our world, the passion to transform or preserve the world as we understand it more deeply. At its best, scholarship becomes a way of loving ourselves, others, and our world more deeply. (p. 58)

The weavings of this text are linked by an exploration of structures, unquestioned ways of knowing&being that can encase us, can limit our creative potential, and can teach us to distrust ourselves. My reliance on outside authority and rigid attitudes towards structures have been shaped, I believe, by the various roles I have found acceptable throughout my life--that of learner in an educational system where right answers and perfection are said to exist, where acceptance of the learner's experiences does not exist, where being a "good" student means doing what the teacher wants--and also that of female where obsequiousness and powerlessness are encouraged, where appearing intelligent, creative, or capable are most often a liability to social acceptance. Finding the courage to "reread" and "rewrite" the text of my knowing&being has been arduous&joyful, exhilarating&frightening.

This, then, is a collection of *essays* towards literacy, the kind of literacy that Freire (1987) and Giroux (1987) speak about, literacy that enables us to become critical of the everyday and to recognize and accept difference. It is hoped that the reading&writing relationship created here symbolizes a different relationship to others--one that legitimizes knowing&being not always governed by outside authority but is responsive to the rhythms of the mind&body, a relationship that helps to (re)create one who can read&write and is critical of how she&he is read&written . . .

* * *

I use compound constructions such as "him&her" instead of those such as "him/her". The ampersand seems to better symbolize a rethinking of dichotomies as inseparable aspects of a unity than the slash which cuts and makes distinct. This thinking is based on an essay by Mezei (1985) entitled "Reading as Writing/Writing as Reading the reader and the decline of the writer/or the rise and fall of the slash".

> And woman as object of the sentence, (sentenced to the object), as reader moves over, crosses over the slash and becomes writer, speaking subject, creator of her own text.
>
> And so I remove the slash: it falls, ambivalent as always, perhaps disconsolate, & is replaced by the ampersand, cheerful, accommodating.
>
> I have read
> &
> I have written
> & (Mezei, 1985, p. 25)

inviting spaces
inviting **spaces**

Most people stop with the Z
But not me!
In the places I go there are things that I see
That I never could spell if I stopped with the Z . . .
You'll be sort of surprised what there is to be found
Once you go beyond Z and start poking around!
(Seuss, 1955, pp. 4-5)

What are your reading&(w)riting habits? What do you **expect**? What do **you** expect? . . . and why?

expect [ad. L. *ex(s)pect-are* to look out for, await, F. *ex* - . . . + *spect-are* to look, freq. of *spec-ere* to see. cf. OF. *especter* (14th c.) to await]

1. *intr.* To wait; to defer action until some contingency arises
2. *trans.* To wait for, await
3. To look forward to as one's goal or motive
4. To look forward (to an event) regard (it) as about to happen; to anticipate the occurrence of (something whether good or evil). Also, to 'look for,' anticipate the coming of (a person or thing), the receipt of (anything) (OED, 1969, p. 423)

reading habits
(w)riting habits
READING&(W)RITING THE WOR(L)D HABITS
(we are coded in ways that we don't even know)

* * *

Do feminist theories&writings provide lenses for knowing&being differently? By writing in different ways, can we create different relationships among reader&writer&text?
By experimenting with written language (as a form of discourse), playing with boundaries that we accept without question, can we challenge our knowing&being in the wor(l)d?
If we invite spaces and distance ourselves from the illusion re-pre-sented, can we become critical of our knowing&being, extend it? What lies beyond? What parts of us are un-re-pre-sentable?

* * *

Please, take off your expectations at the threshold of this text for it is an open system: its spaces invite connection among changing roles of reader, writer, and text. I am, as you are, at once reader, writer, and text in differing degrees. These words reach out and beg multiple interpretations: no single meaning exists. As Barthes says, "a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (1977, p. 146). Reading&writing (in) multi-dimensional spaces . . . a challenge, then, to notions of linearity, of "logic", of mastery over a field of knowledge. This text is a *process* that requires re-formation of what it means to be reader&writer, categories not held to be distinct as we create meaning within and beyond language, listen in spaces that resonate. Our relationships to each other and to the words on these pages are different than those dominant in a capitalist society. "The practices of reading and writing are determined by the widest forms of behaviour. . . . Reading is a consumption, writing is a purely instrumental use of language" (Coward & Ellis, 1977, p. 51). Barthes' "readerly" text encourages readers to consume through an illusion of unity and linearity; it

confirms for the reader what she&he has come to expect through cultural conditioning (Silverman, 1983, pp. 243-246). A "writerly" text, however, subverts the norm through its fragmentary unstructure.

> Segmentation provides the agency whereby the text as product yields to the text as process. It fragments the structure of the classic text in order to reveal the cultural voices which speak it, the codes which constitute its 'reality.' . . . The writerly project 'dis-places' the reader or viewer, alienates him from the all-too-familiar subject-positions of the existing cultural regime. (Silverman, 1983, pp. 247-249)

Because the writerly text refuses closure, it necessitates active participation of the reader in the infinite creation of meanings. Different relationships among reader&writer&text can be explored in the spaces. Gallop, for example, in the opening pages of Reading Lacan, notes that she does not pretend to fully understand the work of Lacan, nor does she believe that a complete understanding is possible. One reader criticized her manuscript.

> The major objection was thus that I was not in command of the material, not in a certain epistemological relation that maintains the proper, unambiguous distance between subject and object of knowledge. More precisely the objection was that I was not in command of the material and I admitted it. . . . I was and am trying to write in a different relation to the material, from a more unsettling confrontation with its contradictory plurivocity, a sort of encounter I believe is possible only if one relinquishes the usual position of command, and thus writes from a more subjective, vulnerable position. (Gallop, 1985, p. 19)

* * *

reading&(w)riting as occurring simultaneously
text as open
cha(i)n(g)ing

inviting spaces
inviting **spaces**

(we)aving processes of reading&(w)riting&texting
interacting
with
(k)no(w) author(ity)
creating me anings

* * *

> Not positing oneself as the only, sol(e) authority. Sheep of the sun. Meaning, a statement that is open to the reader, not better than the reader, not set apart from; not seeking the authority of the writer. Not even seeking the authority of the writing. (Reader could be writer, writer reader. Listener could be teacher.) (Duplessis, 1985, p. 275)

> In the case of feminist theory, the subject, object and audience are not dichotomously divided into mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive categories (subject/object, knower-master/ignorant disciple, teacher/pupil, self/other . . .) but may be defined more in terms of continuities and/or differences. The speaking subject, the subject spoken to and the subject spoken about may be equated; but in any case, there is a constitutive interrelatedness presumed between all three terms. (Gross, 1986b, p. 201)

* * *

The "subject," in post-structuralist theory, refers to the person as a process, more fluid, changeable, and multi-faceted than the "individual" of Renaissance thought. He&she is culturally and historically marked: the unconscious, or that which is beyond language, is recognized as crucial (Silverman, 1983, pp. 126-127). The subject is not coherent and stable. "Poststructuralism proposes a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak" (Weedon, 1987, p. 33). The self is fragmented, changes positions, speaks in different voices, exists at different points in multi-dimensional spaces.

The term "language" extends beyond its common usage as a system of words and refers to any structure of symbols; "reading" and "writing" are the processes whereby the structure creates, comprehends, and reproduces itself and "text" is the processes caught in time&space. "Discourse" is sometimes used interchangeably with "language" and can be framed as follows.

> "Discourse" has . . . a very wide application, encompassing not only speech, writing, and artistic activities of all sorts, but any articulation, even one which takes the form of an architectural structure or a road map. It does not imply any conscious intention, although it does require both a sender and a receiver. The sender may be as unlocalized as culture, or as specific as a poet. . . . Discourse involves the operations of selection and combination. Certain elements must be chosen instead of others, and they must be linked together in some manner. (Silverman, 1983, pp. 103-104)

Discourse is an articulation in which certain elements are chosen (not necessarily consciously) instead of others. What happens to "the others," the leftovers, the unarticulated? How can we begin to look beyond and see what is not symbolized, not re-pre-sentable? Where are the spaces?

> Discourses, in Foucault's work, are ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects which they seek to govern. **Neither the body nor thoughts and feelings have any meaning outside their discursive articulation, but the ways in which discourse constitutes the minds and bodies of individuals is always part of a wider network of power relations, often with institutional bases** [emphasis added]. (Weedon, 1987, p. 108)

* * *

The notion that discourse is objective or neutral, the transparent expression of the individual, is questioned through the disruption of customary languaging. Such play with language is not startlingly new but follows a trend of feminist writers who challenge the (patriarchal) structuring of society through their writing and who believe that discourse creates meaning and consciousness, that it is never simply a transport system for fully formed thought. Language is a symbol system created by people: it is a way of trying to organize or re-present experience. As a structure or model, it is limited by the (in)ability of the hu(wo)man mind&body to understand existence. Discoveries in quantum physics have highlighted the difficulty of describing or even comprehending subatomic phenomenon with limited ways of thinking bound by language (Capra, 1982; Zukav, 1979). How, then, does language confine our ways of being&knowing?

WHEN WE ACCEPT LANGUAGE AS TRANSPARENT, CAPABLE OF RE-PRESENTING "THOUGHT," "REALITY," "SELF"--WE ARE LESS AWARE OF THE MARGINS OF ITS STRUCTURE. WHAT REMAINS UNSAID? WHERE ARE THE SPACES?

DISCOURSES ARE MATERIAL PROCESSES OF BEING&KNOWING

HOW CAN WE DISRUPT OUR READING&(W)RITING THE WOR(L)D HABITS?

> In rejecting leading models of intellectual inquiry (among them, the requirements of formal logic, the structuring of concepts according to binary oppositional structures, the use of grammar and syntax for creating singular, clear, unambiguous, precise modes of articulation and many other assumed textual values), and its acceptance of the idea of its materiality as theory, feminist theory is involved in continuing explorations of and experimentation with new forms of writing, new methods of analysis, new positions of enunciation, new kinds of discourse. (Gross, 1986b, p. 203)

1. Kristeva, in "Stabat Mater" (1986b), writes in double columns--traditional academic discourse on one side and more personal, associative writing on the

other: such a format has also been used by Godard (1986) and Crawford (1981).

2. In "Discourse on the Logic of Language" (1987) and "She Tries Her Tongue; Her Silence Softly Breaks" (1988), Philip juxtaposes poetic word play and scientific/anthropological/'how to' excerpts.

3. Duplessis (1985) rethinks academic writing and explores the idea of (a) feminine aesthetic with her use of sentence fragments and non-sequential, associative, and personal writing.

> The holistic sense of life without the exclusionary wholeness of art. These holistic forms: inclusion, apparent nonselection, because selection is censorship of the unknown, the between, the data, the germ, the interstitial, the bit of sighting that the writer cannot place. Holistic work: great tonal shifts, from polemic to essay to lyric. A self-questioning, the writer built into the center of the work, the questions at the center of the writer, the discourses doubling, retelling the same, differently. And not censored: love, politics, children, dreams, close talk. The first Tampax in world literature. A room where clippings paper the walls. (p. 279)

4. Marlatt (1984a) is concerned with the inadequacy of conventional language to convey women's experiences.

> so many terms for dominance in English are tied up with male experiencing, masculine hierarchies and differences (exclusion), patriarchal holdings with their legalities, where are the poems that celebrate the soft letting-go the flow of menstrual blood as it leaves her body? how can the standard sentence structure of English with its linear authority, subject through verb to object, convey the wisdom of endlessly repeating and not exactly repeated cycles her body knows? or the mutuality her body shares embracing other bodies, children, friends, animals, all those she customarily holds and is held by? how can the separate nouns mother and child convey the fusion, bleeding womb-infant mouth, she experiences in those first days of feeding? what syntax can carry the turning herself inside out in love when she is both sucking mouth and hot gush on her lover's tongue? (p. 55)

5. Etymology is an important element of Warland's bold experimentation (1985).

the structure is the CONTENT : "continere, contain" is the
BODY : "bot-, container"
each time we read/w(rite)
we re/MATERIALIZE : "mater, matter,
material, mother"
read/materialize
curve of a line
our breast and INITIAL : "Latin initium, beginning"
we re/PRODUCE (pp. 63-64)

6. Tostevin (1985), Scott (1984), and Brandt (1986) displace conventional punctuation with space.

For these writers, (re)writing&(re)reading&(re)texting outside of accepted and expected structure is a way of dis-covering that which was not selected and combined in the dominant discourse of (patriarchal) society. As Whitford (1988) notes, any form of organization leaves a residue; "the emergence of distinctions, determinate identities or social organizations always implies something else, that original state of non-differentiation from which they have emerged" (p. 119). What is beyond structure . . . in the spaces?

* * *

spaces writing spaces reading spaces writing
rhythm reading rhythm writing
timespace
breathing bodythought
felt not pre scribed
what sounds and feels right

being

escaping disrupting

languaging creatively
in
multidimensional spaces that
desire

Desire has, in the work of Lacan, been characterized as lack, as absence, as a drive to return to the origin, return to the same, to re-appropriate that which was lost upon birth and entry into family, culture, and language. Silverman notes that one important Lacanian assumption is that the subject desires to return to an original, androgynous whole, to reunite with its lost physiological complement through sexual union (1983, p. 152). Further loss is experienced as the subject is inducted into culture, she&he become more distanced from the "real," that which is beyond signification. With the acceptance of the culture's symbolic order comes the acceptance of illusions of wholeness and coherence such as that symbolized by the mirror stage in which the infant misrecognizes him&her self as complete and separate from the mother as satisfier of needs. Silverman finds that the desire of the Lacanian subject is born of drives which are outside of signification and later directed towards ideal representations of the self as culturally defined: the subject, therefore, is increasingly alienated from him&herself and can never reach the imaginary or ideal representations that she&he perceives (1983, pp. 176-177). "This gap between the child and the objects it perceives is the root of desire, which continually leans over the chasm of individual identity in a bid to restore its imagined lost sense of completeness. It desires a state that once was, and can never be again. Desire is then, by definition, insatiable" (Myers, 1983, p. 36). Idealized familial subject positions are integral to the subject's sense of inadequacy. Roles of mother, father, daughter, son are socially defined: the subject perceives the gap between what she&he is and what such idealized roles represent. In addition, fear of castration, as symbolized by the mother's lack of social privilege (which is intimately connected to her "lack" of visible genitalia), spurs both son and daughter to align themselves with the father who *does* possess social privilege. Desire based on lack can never be fulfilled, is constantly deferred, displaced, and leaves the subject with a profound sense of inadequacy, an uncomfortable space that the subject desires to fill with objects or others who complete him&her.

but
let us play simultaneously (in)
space
as
absence
lack
emptiness (something's missing)
a need to close gaps

and
space
as
absence
(of symbol)
overflowing possibility
fullness, abundance

The spaces in this text are invitations to reread absence as plentitude and possibility, as openings to multiple interpretations: they stimulate awareness of our culturally pre-scribed reading of absence as lack, a gap that we attempt to close in completing ourselves, affirming our subjectivity as coherent and whole. Silverman questions the notion of lack as primordial and positions desire inside the symbolic order; we are taught how and what to desire (1983, pp. 189-193). Myers notes that "there is a distinction between lack, which suggests the fragmentation and disruption of the individual's identity, and absence which simply suggests that the desired object is not present, not fully realised" (1983, p. 38). Is a whole, coherent, linear text akin to the mirror image of the subject--imaginary, ensconced in the symbolic?

let us invite spaces of creative potential, wonder outward . . .

the body of the text, the text of the body

Writing is precisely *the very possibility of change* , the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures. (Cixous, 1981, p. 249)

BEING PULLED DOWN

Q 'D
U N
I A
C S
K

I DON'T WANT TO BE A "FEMINIST"
UGLY WORD
SL I ME
ALIEN-ATING

BUT
BEING PULLED
IN'IN
I
N
DO(IN)WN
T0 WHERE?

I WANT TO COVER THE TITLES OF THE BOOKS I READ
SO
PEOPLE DON'T LOOK AT THEM AND SMIRK
OR CLOSE DOORS IN MY FACE
SO
MEN WON'T FEEL THR EATEN ED AND STOP.
BEING MY FRIENDS
SO
I'M NOT ASKED WHEN I WATCH T.V.
IF THIS IS SOME KIND OF FEMINIST SHOW OR SOMETHING
I MEAN, SHE DOES SEEM TO BE IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION, DOESN'T SHE?
SO
I CAN PRETEND TO BE HAPPY ABOUT WHAT I SEE

I'M NOT.
UGLINESS
PAIN OF POSSIBILITIES

MYSELVES
(THE QUICKSAND)

PULLS
COMPELLS
"I"
HAS TO GIVE UP AND
S
L
I
D
E

* * *

November 21, 1987-How would you see this piece of writing if the voice of women were allowed to speak?

Voice of women?? What voice of women? Who defines such a thing?? I don't believe it exists. I have never thought of this as a problem. When people talk about what is really important in their lives--there are no separate male/female voices. Attempts to make this division are contrived and stereotypical, I think--at least in today's society. Maybe I am naive. Is there a certain voice that emanates from some composite idea of "woman"? If there is, it is all garbled in my mind's ear. I have never really lived in a situation where gender voices are differentiated . . .
If we believe that this is not the only life--that our souls have different incarnations on their journeys toward higher spiritual evolution--then it is ridiculous to separate the two voices. Aren't they really one? All this differentiation is circumstantial and superficial, I think.

* * *

Is there an essence of "femininity"? Does it belong only to women? How does it relate to writing? The body? Such are questions that intrigue many feminists today. Although they differ greatly in their specific theories, three of the major French writers to whom we have access through translation--Irigaray, Cixous, and Kristeva--have some beliefs in common. They share a common intellectual heritage, their psychoanalytic basis in Lacan's rewriting of Freud and their interest in the work of Derrida. All agree that language must be

foregrounded and problematized, that it structures and oppresses in subtle and oblique ways, and that women have historically been excluded from discourses such as philosophy and psychoanalysis (Jones, 1985a, p. 85). What does this silence speak? Writing is seen as emancipatory, a process through which to question culture and society, to upend patriarchy through the very means by which it propagates itself--language.

One very important feature of language in this view is that it is not a vehicle for transmitting thought as freely conceived of by the individual for the individual is no longer the self-determining, rational thinker of the humanist tradition, one whose consciousness becomes increasingly clear to HIM. Besides creating and dissolving his&her own subjectivity and that of others through social interaction, the individual is acted upon, is culturally determined, is shaped through family relations and language. "While we are not the authors of the ways we understand our lives, while we are subjected to regimes of meaning, we are involved in discursive self-production where we attempt to produce some coherence and continuity" (Lather, 1987, p. 11). The individual or subject no longer simply uses language as a tool to express him&herself. Language, or more generally, discourse, is seen as a process whereby we continually absorb and dissolve our subjectivity.

* * *

i am?
motherdaughterwifesister
nieceauntstudentteacherfriend
pre-position
com-position

but none of these
somewhere in between
/boundaried/each/moment/
bo r der sch angi ng
not pinned

always reacting, adjusting
squeezing into place

for a time
then expanding, breathing
free
(like taking off tight jeans)

inconsistent, unpredictable
"i am"
just means a
pause

* * *

> Because all the practices that make up a social totality take place in language, it becomes possible to consider language as the place in which the social individual is constructed. In other words, [wo]man can be seen as language, as the intersection of the social, historical, and individual. It is for this reason that work on language has created consideration of [wo]man as 'subject', that is the individual in sociality as a language-using, social and historical entity. (Coward & Ellis, 1977, p. 1)

For Kristeva, Cixous, and Irigaray, the problematization of language is, to different extents, a political project--a form of resistance against a view of discourse as neutral. Discourse, or language, perceived as the innocent conveyor of pure thought, is challenged as being characteristically patriarchal, infused with masculine bias and thereby a space wherein oppressive power relations are maintained. L'écriture féminine presents the possibilities of difference, upsets the order, the symbolic, the Law of the Father, myths of unity and universality--necessary because women and&or the feminine have been marginalized in Western cultures. Through breaking traditional forms of language and exploring alternatives, the stability and permanence of structures is questioned. For each of these three theorists, l'écriture féminine is closely tied to the body, its rhythms and drives; the body is not regarded as purely biological but is, instead, "written," socially constructed from an early age.

> [Kristeva and Irigaray] have shown that some concept of the body is essential to understanding social production, oppression and resistance;

> and that the body need not, indeed must not be considered merely a biological entity, but can be seen as a socially inscribed, historically marked, psychically and interpersonally significant product. (Gross, 1986a, p. 140)

* * *

> Everything is language, and the body is always a written, never a 'natural' body. (Conley, 1984, p. 57)

Woman lives within a small space, protecting her subjectivity as a human and defending her body from being seen and treated as mere body, from being objectified and even physically invaded. She does not readily or wholly extend outward in her interaction with the world (Young, 1989, pp. 66-67). How can she overcome the fear that dis-locates her body and her self? Can the conscious, loving re-insertion of the body into the discourse of her experience help her to write the text of her body? And what, then, becomes of the body of the text?

Stinson (1986) discusses the traditional dance class and how it requires its participants to be passive direction followers. "Imitation and repetition are the norm for dance training, not only training the body but also training the will, to become both able and anxious to do what the person in authority (the teacher or choreographer) requests. . . . All too often, women use dance to keep themselves isolated from the rest of the world, paralyzed by [their] sense of powerlessness." (pp. 4, 13)

i stood backstage one day ready to dance dressed in a very cutesy costume and ready to project a "presence" i didn't feel a heavy weariness closed in and i knew that if i didn't stop this quit dancing that i could never grow and change my body was "written" by those who watched by those who paid us to perform and by my own habits of thinking and being i can't do this any more i told them

and i left

so that i could learn to write my mind&body?
become literate, critical?
of
the text of the body
the body of the text

* * *

Irigaray posits an integral link between language and sexuality: she distinguishes male and female desire on the basis of sexed bodies and ties each to distinctive forms of language (Irigaray, 1981a). "In opposition to the logic of 'phallic' discourse--characterized by linearity, self-possession, the affirmation of mastery, authority, and above all of unity--feminine discourse must struggle to speak otherwise" (Suleiman, 1985, p. 49).

> The vestiges of a more archaic civilization . . . could give some indication as to what women's sexuality is all about. This very ancient civilization undoubtedly would not have the same language, the same alphabet--Woman's desire most likely does not speak the same language as man's desire, and it probably has been covered over by the logic that has dominated the West since the Greeks. (Irigaray, 1981a, p. 101)

Irigaray's theory vivifies sexual difference, awakens us to the unwritten feminine. In doing so, she calls into question traditional philosophic and psychoanalytic discourse supposedly represented in Western culture as universal, as neutral, as dis-em-body-ed.

> In opposition to [the] prevailing conception of knowledge as a neutrally expressed body of information produced by a sexually indifferent subject from an unspecifiable perspective, Irigaray attempts to clear a space within language for another voice, body, pleasure, other forms of sexuality and desire, other forms of discourse, different forms of reason can be articulated. . . . She wishes to . . . create discourses and representations of women and femininity that may positively inscribe the female body as an autonomous concrete materiality. (Gross, 1986a, pp. 137-138)

In an attempt to free the feminine, Irigaray trespasses the boundaries of traditional academic writing. She explores standard syntax and its relationship between subject and object, opts for questions and exclamations, prefers open-endedness, non-linear structure and multiple voices, utilizes metaphor, mimicry and repetition as part of her exploration (Beaugrande, 1988, pp. 260-269; Jones 1985a, p. 87-88).

Irigaray's "feminine" can be read as a metaphor of that "body" of knowing&being which has, for centuries, been dominated by the masculine "body": in a sense, it is like the unconscious of Western thought (Whitford, 1988). Difference must be recognized and respected, existing structures of knowing&being examined critically in order to effect transformation. Irigaray questions the binary oppositions of structuralist thought, and urges us to go beyond strict dichotomies. For example, she urges a reconceptualization of male-female relationships which beckons us past oppositions to a new and different sense of space&time whose tension embraces attraction, difference, autonomy, but not objectification of the other (Irigaray, 1987, p. 124). Although she invokes the silent voice of femininity, she does not do so in order to segregate the sexes; she works toward validating the separateness of each as well as its connection to the other.

> Beyond the classic opposites of love and hate, liquid and ice lies this perpetually half-open threshold, consisting of lips that are strangers to dichotomy. Pressed against one another, but without any possibility of suture, at least of a real kind, they do not absorb the world either into themselves or through themselves, provided they are not abused or reduced to a mere consummating or consuming structure. Instead their shape welcomes without assimilating or reducing or devouring. (Irigaray, 1987, p. 128)

* * *

January 25, 1988-I feel quite threatened as I read and think about gender differences, defensive about my "reality" and secure within it. I was taught that the only limitations I had were the ones I created for myself. My father and mother always encouraged us to do whatever we wanted. My two sisters are strong willed and determined. I have never felt that being a female is debilitating

in anyway (until Mom's inner conflict in watching my personhood and motherhood collide). But now, I keep getting flashbacks of incidents that made me angry or confused; I'm trying to think about them in a different way. I know I react with a strong survival instinct. I sometimes feel that men are far less free and more confused in this society than women. I see many of them taking on traditionally feminine roles in the house--this in addition to their masculine baggage. They are so eager to be thought of as "open-minded". . . . I am not naive enough to suggest that the experiences of women are not different from those of men. I could write pages of experiences that men could never gain access to. I'm still not sure that dwelling on inequality or injustice is positive--I guess I find a whining "poor-me" feminism quite repulsive. I think that women can question how they act, what they think, and why--be self-responsible, and not martyrs or victims. If we perceive ourselves as handicapped, we are.

* * *

Hélène Cixous decries the traditional psychoanalytic view of woman as "lack," as castrated male . . . she celebrates plentitude, pregnancy, overflow, abundance, multiplicity.

> We're fed up . . . with the litany of castration that's handed down and genealogized. We won't advance backward anymore; we're not going to repress something so simple as the desire for life. Oral drive, anal drive, vocal drive--all these drives are our strengths, and among them is the gestation drive--just like the desire to write: a desire to live self from within, a desire for the swollen belly, for language, for blood. We're not going to refuse, if it should strike our fancy, the unsurpassed pleasures of pregnancy which have actually been always exaggerated or conjured away--or cursed--in the classic texts. (Cixous, 1981, p. 261).

A feminine desire, to Cixous, is one that is motivated by love, generosity, and excess; it is not the classic (psychoanalytic) desire originating in lack and connected to the death drive, closure. The latter "uses death as its accomplice . . . frightens itself with death so as not to leave itself, but rather to return, to conserve itself" (Duren, 1981, p. 43). She rethinks desire in terms of life, a dispersed openness that does not yearn to return to itself (Cixous, 1986, p. 87);

in a sense, the excess, the ex-pulsions of drives unrestricted by socially structuring influences (Duren, 1981). Cixous repeatedly refers to the female body and even to a feminine libido. Libido, she says, is "something which can be defined from the body, as the movement of a pulsion toward an object" and emphasizes a "decipherable libidinal femininity which can be located in a writing that can have been produced by a male or a female" (Cixous & Conley, 1984, pp. 51-52). She uses the term "economy" to discuss a relation of spending and return, a feminine libidinal economy investing itself freely and bountifully and a masculine libidinal economy investing with an eye on the return to itself (Cixous, 1986, pp. 86-87; Cixous & Conley, 1984, p. 52). These two coexist in all people.

> My own position is to insist always on the fact that libidinal femininity is not the *propre* of women and that libidinal masculinity is not the *propre* of men. What is most important for me, what allows me to continue to live and not to despair, is precisely the conviction that it is not anatomical sex, not on the role of man and of woman but that it depends in fact on life's chance which is every individual's responsibility. (Cixous & Conley, 1984, p. 54)

Feminine libido originates in a pre-oedipal stage which both sexes share: in later life, this libido is repressed and exists in the unconscious. Women retain more of their initial bisexuality than men do because they are more closely allied to mothers--as mothers. They have fewer defenses against the body's drives (Cixous, 1981, pp. 251, 254) because they are not as completely absorbed by the symbolic, the culturally acceptable codes (Jones, 1985a, p. 83).

> Women . . . for culturally negative reasons . . . are not called upon, they are not obligated to participate in the big social fête--which is phallocentric--since they are often given places in the shadow, places of retreat, where they are in fact parked. It will be more easily accepted that a woman does not battle, does not want power. A man will not be forgiven. (Cixous & Conley, 1984, pp. 54-55).

* * *

August 8, 1988-I have had three dreams lately that seem similar. In two of them, a male bites my neck. He is not mean or threatening in any way, but the vampire image is apparent. I remain very calm and emotionless while all this is happening. In another dream, I am at a swimming pool--a man takes my hand and we go underwater in the deep end. I feel like I might suffocate or run out of air; I think about drowning. But these thoughts are so calm and detached. What bothers me is how empty I am--I don't fight or get upset. It's almost like I'm not really there. Is this all about fear of relationships with men--how I might be subsumed? Or is it fear of the masculine side of me taking over?
Is it fear at all?

* * *

Cixous combines a deconstruction of phallocentrism, the privileging of masculine over feminine with a deconstruction of logocentrism, the privileging of speech over writing--the idea that speech is more closely tied to intention and meaning than writing can be. She overturns these orders, seeking to highlight the marginal term in each pair; such is her means of questioning. She views writing as possibility for change. L'écriture féminine cannot be defined as a particular style of writing because it cannot be theorized or enclosed (Cixous, 1981, p. 253).

> A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic; as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments; there is no other way. There's no room for her if she's not a he. If she's a her-she, it's in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the "truth" with laughter. (Cixous, 1981, p. 258)

* * *

June 13, 1988-Reading Cixous and Irigaray makes me think that what I am doing here is trying to understand my identity as a woman. I have learned to be so successful at what might be construed as a masculine way of knowing&being. What have I denied, subdued in the process? For some time

now, I have been rejecting the part of me that is motivated by achievement and significant others, that concentrates on goals with an eye(I) on perfection, that plays subtle games of power and control. Are these vestiges of male discourse? I think that men are victims of all this as well as women--but maybe they do have a privileged place in the world. Are they comfortable in their 'identities'?

March 22, 1988-I read Culler's "Reading as a Woman" last night (from On Deconstruction, 1982). I wish I'd never peeked over this fence. I threw it across the room--then went and picked it up again, tears rolling down my face. It is threatening to me. All this stuff dredges up memories of how alone and alienated I felt at school. Being a "smart," opinionated, and capable girl was not construed as very attractive or very "feminine"; I remember remarks about how I would probably never get married and if I did I would probably never have kids. In junior high I was so outgoing and confident, full of energy and zest--what happened in high school? I can remember the feeling of wanting to withdraw, of being more careful and quiet in school involvement; I even had boyfriends "help" me with my homework!! I did not realize I was being socialized into an idea of "femininity."

January 24, 1990-The adolescent body needs to be re-membered here. Can one resist the social dictates of "femininity"? At what price? The tension between needing social acceptance and needing to be myself finally came out on the body. My hair began to fall out in patches; I gained weight. This continued into high school. I finally initiated a harsh dieting program that I now believe was near anorexic; I stopped menstruating. The hair problem continued. The doctor said I was pushing myself too hard and prescribed valium. One morning I fell asleep in English class. How many other apparently healthy and "normal" people were&are resisting socially prescribed roles in dis-ease and subtle self-destruction?

* * *

Julia Kristeva refutes the notion of "woman" or "femininity," choosing instead to view masculine-feminine as faces of signification. She emphasizes

positionality rather than essence in her writing and notes the power of the marginal position to subvert that which is predominant.

> Kristeva does not have a theory of 'femininity', and even less of 'femaleness.' What she does have is a theory of marginality, subversion and dissidence. In so far as women are defined as marginal by patriarchy, their struggle can be theorized in the same way as any other struggle against a central power structure. (Moi, 1986a, p. 164)

Kristeva discusses two aspects of the signifying process, the way we come to attach meaning to our world. These two faces she calls the semiotic and the symbolic. The symbolic is predominant in everyday discourse and thus is associated with the masculine whereas the semiotic plays at the edges and the underlay, much like the feminine in Western society. The words "feminine" and "masculine" are then not associated with biology; we all possess both. Kristeva's theory insists upon initial bisexuality and concentrates on the pre-oedipal.

The semiotic is pre-oedipal, the origin of drives--pulsions and stases--rhythm. Drives are energy charges that orient the body to the mother: they continually seek her or a replacement of her. The semiotic is largely repressed as a consequence of the mirror and castration phases whereby the subject is initiated into the socio-symbolic order: Kristeva accepts these aspects of psychoanalytic theory. As glimpses of the unconscious, the semiotic surfaces in the breaks, contradictions, and silences of the symbolic. The symbolic is a place of signifiers, a process whereby drives are refigured as socially acceptable symbols: it is a means of protecting the body from its drives, its desires. "The symbolic is a superimposed order, regulating, ordering, and stabilising the fragmentary energies of semiotic flows in order to produce meaning, coherence, identity in language" (Gross, 1986a, p. 130). The tension between the semiotic and the symbolic is what constitutes the subject: hence, the changeability and fluidity of the subject is highlighted. It cannot be fixed, an essence, if its existence depends on the variable relationship between the semiotic and the symbolic. The semiotic ensures that "the subject will always be a subject in process" (Weedon, 1987, p. 70).

Kristeva's theory, then, strongly denies identity of any kind, even sexual identity (Kristeva, 1981, p. 138). She seeks to undermine a system that

categorizes and classifies by refusing to define (Moi, 1986a, p. 163). She therefore does not theorize l'écriture féminine as writing specific to women, but rather as writing in which the jouissance, pleasure, of the semiotic shows through. Women's writing does show "certain stylistic and thematic elements"--but Kristeva questions whether this is indeed a result of characteristics peculiar to women or by position within the social order (Kristeva, 1987, p. 112). She has studied work by male writers such as Mallarmé, Lautrémont, and Joyce and finds transformational power in their "poetic language" which she views as the trespassing of the semiotic on the symbolic, disruption in the everyday order. When desire is translated into symbol, discourse, there is never a tidy one-to-one correspondence between the two (Kristeva, 1986a, p. 103). This semiotic remainder reveals itself as silence, rupture. In the discourse used by avant-garde writers such as Joyce, the language is marginal, the texts exceeding the phallocentric, logocentric, "putting . . . subjectivity . . . into question and showing subjectivity in process" (Weedon, 1987, pp. 69-70). Kristeva does not believe in complete rejection of phallocentric discourse since all subjects are born into it--she advocates instead working from within, trying to find ways of challenging the "truths" of our cultures.

* * *

December 10, 1988-I am beginning to think that all this talk about bisexuality is really an excuse for not accepting difference, for still feeling inferior in a sense. Someone asked me the other day if I could distinguish a text written by a male from one written by a female. I don't think I can, but she says she does--easily. She said that being female and being different is nothing to be ashamed of--I said, "I know"--but that statement is haunting me. At first I dismissed Irigaray because I thought she concentrates on sexual difference; now I wonder if I am so insecure in who I am and so familiar with competing in a masculine way that I am just not willing to legitimate sexual differences.

Is there an essence of "femininity"? Does it belong only to women? What are the social boundaries of femaleness and how can we transgress them? Or, is femininity beyond social boundaries? Woman has traditionally been represented, written about. How does she become the author of her own text? If language creates and is created by people, is not transcendent and dis-

em-body-ed, then shall we, for a time at least, consciously re-member and write our corpo(realities)? Shall we write the text of the body, transforming the body of the text?

confusing, proliferating complexity
questions advance, retreat,
multiply and
shake the "I" that slid and

p l n e

s i t d

s e

p n r

i r

s

l t d

er

both&and

We can assert that there is not one way of seeing the world, not one way from which it may be known. There is not one universal subject from whose perspective knowledge can be simply transformed into an objective and universal account. . . . We are confronted virtually with the problem of reinventing the world of knowledge, of thought, of symbols and images. Not of course by repudiating everything that has been done but by subjecting it to exacting scrutiny and criticism from the position of woman as subject (or knower). (Smith, 1975, pp. 366-367)

The major contribution of physics to western thought, and there are many, may be its impact on the artificial categories by which we structure our perceptions, since ossified structures of perception are the prisons in which we unknowingly become prisoners. Quantum theory boldly states that something can be this and that (a wave and a particle). It makes no sense to ask which of these is really the true description. Both of them are required for complete understanding. (Zukav, 1979, p. 219)

how do we know?
how **do** we know?
how do **we** know?
how do we **know**?
(k)now?
(do we ever . . . k no w?)
knowing knower knowledge know l edge?
know 2 edges know 3 edges?
edges of knowing (k)nowing the edges
(g)nawing the edges

how do we be?
how **do** we be?
how do **we** be?

how do we **be**?
be? not be?

am were become is was are
becoming became

being

buffeted
bo r der sch a(i)n(g)i ng

how do we
dis-cover me aning
become
knowing?

how is meaning created? ordered?
who ordered meaning? how?
is there meaning beyond the order that we perceive?
beyond language?

* * *

i need to explore, to question how i think and why what are the structures (strictures) that enclose my knowing&being is there a beyond where are the spaces through which i may slip

- Thought has always worked through opposition,
  Speaking/Writing
  Parole/Ecriture
  High/Low
  Through dual, hierarchical oppositions. Superior/Inferior. Myths, legends, books. Philosophical systems. Everywhere (where) ordering intervenes, where a law organizes what is thinkable by oppositions (dual, irreconcilable or sublatable, dialectical). And all these pairs of

> oppositions are couples. Does that mean something? Is the fact that logocentrism subjects thought--all concepts, codes and values--to a binary system, related to "the" couple, man/woman? (Cixous, 1986, pp. 63-64)

Christ notes that dualisms are "deeply embedded in the structure of our thought and language" (1987, p. 72). She discusses the history of dualistic thought and language in terms of religious notions that separate God from the human world, that distinguish transcendence, order, and rationality from nature, (apparent) chaos, irrationality. Divinity as transcendent is an idea that has evolved through thousands of years, not simply "the way it is." Studies of ancient people and prepatriarchal Goddesses give us clues as to different relations between humanity and divinity--relations not so clearly distinguished, separated, hierarchized.

What does it mean to distinguish, to separate, to hierarchize and privilege? To order? (I watch my children playing, endlessly categorizing, organizing, grouping their toys . . . creating order, making meaning, controlling experience.) Are the structures of our thought and language no less arbitrary, inspired by the same need to impose order and thereby facilitate comprehension of experience? Where are the spaces in a comprehension so limited, so bound?

> Dichotomous thought does not arise from an honest effort to comprehend experience but from a hubristic effort to shape it. By excluding most of experience, and limiting discourse to a set of opposed constructs, men have been able to create the appearance of comprehension of experience and to attribute superiority and inferiority to its elements. (French, 1985, p. 501)

for hundreds of years valuing one side of dualisms, oppositions over the other (Christ, 1987, p. 72; Owens, 1983, p. 62; Whitford, 1988, pp. 113-114)

man mind public order right

---

woman body private chaos wrong

I *THINK*, THEREFORE I *AM*

?

Retreating into our minds, we have forgotten how to "think" with our bodies, how to use them as agents of knowing (Capra, 1982, p. 40).

rational thought

---

sensuous knowing

Reason is seen as the highest and distinguishing faculty in **man** [emphasis added]. . . . The senses, the feelings, the imagination, the unconscious energies which materialize in the form of dreams and fantasies, are all regarded with immense suspicion, as disruptive forces working against rational lucidity and the comprehension of the ideal. Here in this complex tangle of powerful assumptions and beliefs, we find a number of dissociations which have vitiated Western civilization for over two thousand years: there is the dissociation between the body and mind, between the real and the ideal, between time and eternity. (Abbs, 1979, p. 106)

Since at least the seventeenth century, if not long before, reason has been understood in dichotomous terms, being characterised oppositionally and gaining its internal coherence only by the exclusion of its 'others'--the passions, the body, the emotions, nature, faith, materiality, dreaming, experience. . . . In questioning this binary mode of categorisation, feminists demonstrated that reason is a concept associated with the norms and values of masculinity, and its opposites, or

> 'others,' with femininity. **In short, feminist theory seeks to transform and extend the concept of reason so that instead of excluding concepts like experience, the body, history, etc. these are included within it or acknowledged as necessary for reason to function** [emphasis added]. (Gross, 1986b, pp. 202-203)

sometimes i am so aware of how i *know* with my mind&body all at once like the time i was reading and understood suddenly the view that language constructs reality, that it is not simply a vehicle for transmitting thought with the kids playing cars around my feet all at once i froze, muscles paralyzed impact seeping slowly through my mind&body afraid to move lest i should lose that insight&incite&in site

transforming, extending, rereading, rewriting the concept of reason, of rationality, including other ways of knowing&being . . .

> What . . . would the abandoning of dualisms mean for an area such as dance education? First, dance education would not have to describe itself in the terms used now. It would no longer be appropriate to say that dance is a *physical* activity, but rather that dance is a *movement* activity which *people* engage in. The whole notion of 'physical' activity would disappear, taking with it our uneasiness about our bodies and allowing us to embrace ourselves as holistic organisms, functional systems, that are at all times expressing who we are. Education might adopt our orphaned bodies and movement study might comprise a larger portion of the school curriculum. . . . The development of artistic expressiveness and creativity would not be treated as secondary and separate from other kinds of learning. Instead, we would understand the potential that exists for all the subject areas to contribute to the development of an individual's capacity to function creatively. (Flynn, 1986, pp. 45-46)

The arts--dance, drama, visual art, music, and English (Abbs, 1987)--provide us with opportunities to express and respond via other means than rational thinking and conventional language. Through these alternative symbol

systems, we can experience ways of knowing&being that are sensuous and preconceptual, intuitive and feeling (Abbs, 1979, 1987; Madenfort, 1983). In traditional North American educational systems, however, the stature of the arts is low. Greene (1980) notes that the tendency to trivialize the arts ensues, historically, from an emphasis on empirical ways of knowing&being. Such thinking accentuates order, sequence, and the idea of verification--the concept that knowledge is objective and distinct--something that can be taught and learned.

> The scientifically explained world is even today presented to the young as objectively existent, predefined by experts, there to be accommodated to, or manipulated, or controlled. . . . The tendency to treat the arts as merely decorative, as "frills," effectively excludes all sorts of alternative possibilities when it comes to the ordering of experience and the search for meaning. (Greene, 1980, p. 20)

* * *

knowing . . . experiencing (re)moving the slash between "opposites" re-cognizing complexity, a web of interrelatedness endeavoring to think in a way that does not privilege one or the other reclaiming knowing&being that is inclusive, embracing possibilities me aning-making that does not ex**clude**
exclude [ad. L. *exclude-re* to shut out, f. *ex* - out + *claudere* to shut] (OED, 1969, p. 382)

reason not de**fin**ed [*finis*- end, limit, boundary] (OED, 1969, p. 805) con**fin**ed in (masculine?) patriarchal ex**clus**ive terms re cognizing (in different ways)
cognition [ad. L. *cognition-em* a getting to know, acquaintance, notion, knowledge] (OED, 1969, p. 596)

> According to eastern philosophy in general, opposites, such as good-bad, beautiful-ugly, birth-death, and so on, are "false distinctions." One cannot exist without the other. **They are mental structures which we have created. These self-made and self-maintained illusions are the sole causes of paradoxes** [emphasis added]. To escape the

bonds of conceptual limitation is to hear the sound of one hand clapping. (Zukav, 1979, p. 224)

both&and instead of either/or

oppositions as no more than the perceived limits of unities ideals, imaginary in the sense that they can never be reached in a "pure" state linguistic labels that delineate cultural borders, a closed system, a limited way of thinking in going beyond binary oppositions as strictly defined categories we may see them as fluid structure patterns in process transformable (not existing complete in a transcendent realm) always part of the other, currents in the same sea held by a tension that is rhythmical energy charges and the lulls that space them - * * - * - - - * * - - * * * * * intensity and . . . pause (tied to the physical body?) energy systems interacting conversations that are infinite and cannot be transcended

both&and constantly moving in rhythm

* * *

how do we know?
how **do** we know?
how do **we** know?
how do we **know**?
(k)now?
(do we ever . . . k no w?)
knowing knower knowledge know l edge?
know 2 edges know 3 edges?
edges of knowing (k)nowing the edges
(g)nawing the edges

how do we be?
how **do** we be?
how do **we** be?
how do we **be**?
be? not be?

am were become is was are
becoming became

being
buffeted
bo r der sch a(i)n(g)i ng

how do we
dis-cover me aning
become
knowing?

how is meaning created? ordered?
who ordered meaning? how?
is there meaning beyond the order that we perceive?
beyond language?

* * *

What happens when we collapse distinct categories of dichotomous thought, erase the slash in oppositions such as man/woman, public/private, mind/body, order/chaos, right/wrong? Much of our thinking is characterized by a structuralist undercurrent that emphasizes separation; such divisions are limited attempts at organizing experience. "Structuralism thinks in terms of systemmatic oppositions between objects that are already fully constituted, held in a system of oppositions that gains its internal balance and limits from a **transcendent** subject" [emphasis added] (Coward & Ellis, 1977, p. 22). Words, symbols, or signifiers are said to have referents in the realm of the Ideal, a linear one-to-one relationship exists between the symbol (signifier) and what it symbolizes (signifed). The word "mother," for example, would refer to The Concept of Mother. There is A Reality, and language is our way of naming it. A transcendent mind and linear Reality is implied (Coward & Ellis, 1977, pp. 11-24).

> Feminist **poststructuralism** [emphasis added] . . . is a mode of knowledge production which uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change. . . . Language is not transparent as in humanist discourse, it is not expressive and does not label a 'real' world. Meanings do not exist prior to their articulation in language and language is not not an abstract system, but is always socially and historically located in discourses. (Weedon, 1987, p. 41)

For Lacan, meaning emerges with the association of one term to its binary opposite, the most fundamental being the pair absence-presence. He reads Freud's story of the child's "fort-da" game, in which the child alternately hides a toy from sight (saying "fort"-gone) and brings it back again (saying "da"-there), as an experience of self-loss since the subject exists at the level of the imaginary and does not clearly differentiate him&herself from the external. The toy, then, is seen as being continuous with self. As first uttered independently, "fort," the unary signifier, is nonsensical: only with the emergence of its opposite does it become meaningful. The second term, "da," has no relation to the real: its meaning is derived strictly from its relation to the unary signifier. ("Real" is used here to discuss that state of being which is unmediated. It refers to the drives, the phenomenal world, that which is beyond signification.) The coherence of the binary terms within a closed system initiates entry of the subject into the symbolic, a moment which also involves greater distance from the real, the formation of an unconscious which hosts further self-losses, and the beginnings of a desire which is culturally determined. (Silverman, 1983, pp. 167-176)

meaning, in poststructuralist theory, is created in the CONTEXT of discourse and not because of positive, one-to-one correspondances between signifiers and referents RELATIONSHIPS among similar and different signifiers and among signifiers in their sequential unfolding are what determine meaning the word "mother" thus derives its meaning syntactically and associatively meaning slides is never clear de**fin**ed [*finis* - end, limit, boundary] (OED, 1969, p. 809) to de-fine . . .

meaning does not exist separate from context . . . does not exist in a separate, ideal realm is not universal timeless ahistorical with transparent forms of discourse to carry it to consciousness meaning is produced created (as we are) in discourse which cannot "represent" or express as accurately (as was once) thought is not neutral or transparent a window to meaning but is always instead creator&curator of meaning discourse is material (Gross, 1986b; Jaggar, 1983; Weedon, 1987)

> The non-meaning of the unary signifier initates the endless process of displacements and substitutions which comprise signification within the Lacanian scheme. At the same time, it deprives the subject of any autonomy. As a consequence of the central part played by the unary signifier in the organization of the subject, the latter has no meaning of its "own," and is entirely subordinated to the field of social meaning and desire. (Silverman, 1983, p. 173)

* * *

discourses are complex, contextual, changeable do not cohere around a central idea of "truth" or a unified consciousness, a transcendence, an exteriority discursive practice is material in that it participates in forming knowing&being

> Discourse is tied to the material conditions of social life, to the institutions that exert control over social relations. (Taubman, 1981, p. 43)

> We need to understand the intricate network of discourses, the sites where they are articulated and the institutionally legitimized forms of knowledge to which they look for their justification. The most common guarantees of the 'truth' of discourses are science, God and common sense. (Weedon, 1987, p. 126)

discourses are material processes&products of power&resistance knowing&being with a paradoxical relationship to them in one sense the consequences of these relations but in another creating and prop(agat)ing them

> It is in discourse that power and knowledge are linked together. (Foucault, 1980, p. 100)

knowledge-power exist in multiple, changeable, and PRODUCTIVE relationships to one another an IMMANENCE - TENSION knowledge-power are not transcendent, exterior separate (and not appropriable) but are complex webs existing in relationships of attraction and repulsion that can be disrupted or changed relations within among

> Living systems are organized in such a way that they form multi-leveled structures, each level consisting of subsytems which are wholes in regard to their parts, and parts with respect to their larger wholes. . . . All these entities--from molecules to human beings, and on to social systems--can be regarded as wholes in the sense of being integrated structures, and also as parts of larger wholes at higher levels of complexity. In fact . . . parts and wholes in an absolute sense do not exist at all. (Capra, 1982, p. 43)

* * *

symbol systems, discourses are never neutral or valueless they masquerade as common sense and are deeply embedded in our ways of knowing&being discourses circulate certain knowledges, power relations which require particular subjects to speak them they implicitly or explicitly represent people in certain ways

> To speak is to assume a subject position within discourse and become subjected to the power and regulation of the discourse. (Weedon, 1987, p. 119)

> To learn a language is to think in its terms, which requires assimilation of its implicit values at a profound level of the self. (French, 1985, p. 451)

representation (re-presentation re **pre** sent ation re pre **sent** ation) the "process of analysis: naming, controlling, remembering, understanding . . .

confirms the possibility of an imitation (mimesis) based on the dichotomy of presence and absence" (Jardine in Nemeth, 1986, p. 83)

if representation occurs within the symbolic, and if the terms and names within the symbolic have meaning only in relation to each other, have no one-to-one correspondances with the (non existent) IDEAL if the symbolic is culturally and historically determined--then representation is changeable, transformable we must question the conditions under which representation of subjects, of "reality" occur, attempt to speak the silences, feel the gaps, foreground the margins be critical of the limitations of symbol systems (there isn't one that can *completely* represent human experience . . .)

it is a modern, humanist subject in its coherence, stability, unification that claims the ability to represent reality (in its own imaginary mirror image?)
center of the universe position of mastery over objects represented

> For modern man, everything that exists does so only in and through representation. To claim this is also to claim that the world exists only in and through a subject who believes that he is producing the world in producing its representation. (Owens, 1983, p. 66)

* * *

the imaginary representation of the individual, of the world as complete, separate (as seen in the Lacanian mirror) mis taken individual (author)ity in construction of the re pre sentation how much space exists between the (imaginary) (ideal) representation of the subject&world as created by the symbolic and the subject as an experiencing being? the space of lack, inadequacy? the space of potential, abundance? (privileging of lack over abundance . . . for the purpose of control??)

I am uneasy about the notion of the subject entering a symbolic order that divorces him&her from the Real, from the body, the drives, and the phenomenal world. Does this further reinforce a mind/body split? The subject is further fragmented, alienated from her&himself. I need to find a way of reconciling the "parts", the imaginary, the real, the symbolic, of recognizing wholeness, a sense

of inclusion that does not necessitate the domination of one part by the others as the symbolic dominates the real. I need to find a way for the subject to be at once autonomous and also constructed. I cannot disregard my nagging doubts, my own spiritual, psychic experiences and those of others, experiences which we can never completely contain, limit, enclose in words. I cannot accept a "subject" wholly constructed in discourse nor can I disregard how discourse imprisons us, how important it is to become critical, break out, play with boundaries. But neither can I accept a humanist view of the individual with a central human essence--fixed, unchanging, ready to be developed, realized, discovered through experience, reflection--largely unaffected by context.

a "self" a subjectivity essential OR constituted in discourse
either/or?
maybe somehow
a "self" a subjectivity essential & constituted in discourse
both&and . . .

how can we reconcile these two views of the subject as
created/structured/strictured and also mindful, a creative agent
experiencing on other planes?
p h y s i c a l l y ? p s y c h i c a l l y ? y i c a l l y p s h and an(other)
c/see/sea

not completely written in discourse? not completely inherent, untouched?
both&and
always a mixture of the two not black or white always differing shades of grey (like the tension between binary oppositions, NOT separate)

Weedon re-cognizes critical reflective powers of the subject born of the discrepancies among conflicting discourses and contradictory subject positions offered to the individual (1987, p. 106) Discrepancies, contradictions open spaces for critical and creative thinking.

> Although the subject in poststructuralism is socially constructed in discursive practices, she none the less exists as a thinking, feeling subject

> and social agent, capable of resistance and innovations produced out of the clash between contradictory subject positions and practices. She is also a subject able to reflect upon the discursive relations which constitute her and the society in which she lives, and able to choose from the options available. (Weedon, 1987, p. 125)

* * *

Western philosophy's concept of rationality is, to Luce Irigaray, a Lacanian (male) imaginary, a mis-recognized coherent, whole identity. Irigaray posits a female imaginary that does not revolve around notions of identity and non-contradiction (Whitford, 1988). As Kristeva's semiotic disrupts the symbolic order and ensures that the subject will remain forever in process, Irigaray's female imaginary disrupts the coherence of the male imaginary and assures us of the potential for social change. Irigaray envisions a relationship between the two that is creative and sexual, "in which the two elements in intercourse bring forth offspring, rather than a domination-subordination model in which one part of the self is repressing the other" (Whitford, 1988, p. 111). Irigaray reminds us again of the necessity of recognizing (sexual) difference, if only in a symbolic sense, and of reconceptualizing the relationship between and among different elements.

both&and
in
context

> [Context] comes from the Latin terms *con* and *texere*, meaning "to weave together." Context, then, is a process of relating, of weaving together. This context that is an individual human being manifests itself as body, mind, soul, history, works, and the like. (Each of these manifestations . . . can ultimately be treated as wave phenomena.) Consciousness, which is tied to language, convention, and ego, has access only to a miniscule fraction of all the material available in the holoid. (Leonard, 1978, p. 139)

M(other)ing

writing for most women today involves a profound confrontation with the mother as role & institution as a heritage of oppression and invisibility not to mention pain as the model of feminine creation as bodily pleasure joy (Brandt, 1986, p. 89)

I

Does a mother speak? In words? Did she ever? (Or was your mom mum/dumb/numb?) Here.

(Can you hear it?)

(Not just with your ears!)
Like something dispersed in nothingness. Or maybe nothing dispersed in something. Or maybe nothing dispersed in nothing. A solution, not spoken in words. (Saturated/precipitate. Words as residue.) The words of a mother are (k)notwords. (K)notwords dispersed in your being; (k)notwords that, paradoxically, give you a voice.

Does a mother dissolve her Self in your beingness? Forever or just for awhile? When does she pull back and re-form? Or does she? Was She ever?

My mom said that the day she brought me home from the hospital, someone pulled the blinds down around her, and a voice said that this was her life now, that nothing else mattered.
Did she speak words? Have a Self?

They might have miscalculated though--my mother and father. They taught me to be a person and to say what I thought. They forgot that I might be a mother someday--didn't tell me the rest of the story.

But the story doesn't end like they believed. We are rewriting it together. *This* mother speaks (in words, too)--even if you are hearing impaired. Always did.

> Not all mothers are silent, I hear you say. None are, I answer. But they are unable to give symbolic weight to their existence; to pass on a commanding tradition of their meanings to the world. Occupying the "muted" space in the muted/dominant paradigm of language coinage, they are not silent but unheard. (Scott, 1984, p. 125)

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) found, through interviewing 135 women, that some of them didn't have a voice, didn't have the confidence or the words to say what they thought and felt. Some of them were only beginning to validate their life experiences and their ways of knowing, only beginning to express an inner sense of self through language.

> In describing their lives, women commonly talked about voice and silence. . . . Women repeatedly used the metaphor of voice to depict their

> intellectual and ethical development; and the development of voice, mind, and self were intricately interwoven. (Belenky et al, 1986, p.18)
> None of [the] daughters particularly admired their fathers for speaking out. For fathers to have a voice was a given--not an achievement. For fathers to develop a listening ear and for mothers to "gain a voice" were the feats that those who were integrating the voices of reason and feeling noted and appreciated. (Belenky et al, 1986, p. 177)

Being small and female meant that I had to learn to defend myself verbally--or be crushed. At the playground in Grade 2, I cautioned the bullies to leave my younger sister alone or I'd have to deal with them. (You have a tongue in your head; why don't you use it, my mother said.) I did.

Lines from a song and dance routine--"I'm puny, short, and little--but I'm loud!" (I won trophies for that.)

When my drama teacher tried to kiss me in Grade 8, I called him a bastard and told him to fuck off.

No problem with this kid's tongue.

II

What happens when the kid with the tongue becomes a mother?

(mothertongue? myothertongue?)

All wrapped up in the wonder of co-habiting bodies, the Self dissolves in some kind of sharingness, contentment, peace. Different perspective, immunity from the world, untouchable strength. No need for words now; moving silence speaks (k)notwords, communion. Mindbodies know in ways that can't be disputed things that only fleetingly have words attached and things that aren't anything more than fleeting. It doesn't matter. It's okay to just be.

Let's intellectualize 'decentering the self.'
In poststructuralist theories the centrality of the "self" is usurped by discourse. The individual is thus referred to as a "subject." Foregrounded as the means

through which consciousness&unconsciousness is structured, discourse is no longer an innocent, neutral vehicle for self-expression; instead it is shown to mask the interests of particular groups in society. Personhood or subjectivity is thus perceived of as inconsistent, a process, a contextual structuring&structuredness instead of a given or constant.

> [Feminist poststructuralism] is a theory which decentres the rational, self-present subject of humanism, seeing subjectivity and consciousness, as socially produced in language, as a site of struggle and potential change. Language is not transparent as in humanist discourse, it is not expressive and does not label a 'real' world. Meanings do not exist prior to their articulation in language and language is not an abstract system, but is always socially and historically located in discourses. Discourses represent political interests and in consequence are constantly vying for status and power. The site of this battle for power is the subjectivity of the individual and it is a battle in which the individual is an active but not sovereign protagonist. (Weedon, 1987, p. 41)

Kristeva suggests a subject that is always 'in process,' never finished. In Lacanian tradition, she notes two important events that determine that the subject becomes a language (symbol) using being. The first of these is the mirror phase which occurs around six to eighteen months of age. The child sees him&herself in the mirror and imagines him&herself to be completely separate from the mother. The ability to situate oneself in an external, seemingly complete image or symbol becomes a model for further identifications in the construction of subjectivity. The castration phase furthers the transition to a language using being. The subject discovers that his&her mother is lacking the phallus. (The phallus is, to Lacan (1977), the privileged signifier of desire. It does not refer specifically to anatomy and is considered "symbolic" because "the penis can never approximate the phallus, just as the actual father can never conform to the epic proportions of the symbolic father." Silverman, 1983, pp. 183-184). A boy, on discovering his mother's "castration," fears for himself and thereby displaces his Oedipal attachment for his mother onto his father. The girl, however, perceives her similarity to the mother and never fully escapes her primary maternal attachment (Feral, 1978, p.4). The father represents the socio-symbolic order, what Lacan calls the Law-of-the-

Father (Furman, 1985, p. 71), an order into which the boy is initated with the castration phase and which the girl enters negatively.

The break with the mother necessitates acceptance of social structures such as language and signals the repression/sublimation of drives that orient the body to hers. Kristeva maintains that this unconscious collection of drives, the semiotic, surfaces in the spaces/breaks/transgressions of the symbolic. Because the semiotic exists and surprises, the subject can never be consistent, unified, and whole in its socialization.

How does your mother speak? Is it in words?

Irigaray does not believe that denying the mother's (sexed) body is a requirement for entering the symbolic. Denial is itself a repression of sexual difference and, as such, assures that no "real" symbolic exchange can ever take place. Since the female body as subject is unwritten, has no means by which to symbolize itself, it can only represented by the dominant, patriarchal (and sole) discourse. No *exchange* is possible. (Gauthier, 1986, p. 42)

> & Freud was wrong the child doesn't learn to speak only in being separated from her mother her first contact with language its sounds its rhythms its irrational joy happens inside the mothers body even before she is born her most intense experience of words occurs in the mothertongue (Brandt, 1986, p. 89)

Think and reflect. Or/And. Live pregnancy/motherhood and become conscious of what happened to You/you/---? Decentering the self isn't a novel idea for mothers. What parts of us live outside of language?
In mothertongue? (myothertongue?)

III
What happens when the mother/child don't share, don't dissolve?

You've lost that motherly feeling? . . . Or maybe you never had it this time. (Don't tell anyone.)

Isn't Motherhood about plentitude and harmony?

> There are thousands of ways of living one's pregnancy; to have or not have with that still invisible other a relationship of another intensity. And if you don't have that particular yearning, it doesn't mean you're in any way lacking. (Cixous, 1981, p. 262)

Oh, no?

It's not very Maternal. It's downright sacrilegious to say you are allergic to your unborn child. (I was told not to talk Like That). Pregnancy can make eyes water, nose run, body ache, reject food.

It was almost five months before *I* miscarried, had a miscarriage, lost the baby--one that moved inside but not with me. What did I do wrong? What if I expelled it from myself, didn't love it enough? (Don't tell anyone. No one wants to hear.)
There must have been something wrong, Everyone consoles. It's all for the best, dear.
SQUISH! the illusion of being in control. (*I* don't do things this way. *You* betrayed me, Body. . . No. . . *We* knew--weren't allowed to know--all along.)
Put your feet up, the doctor said. If it's going to happen, that's it. I don't have a magic pill to stop it. (No kidding.)
Don't be a crybaby, the nurse said. You're young--you'll have other babies.
Don't grieve.
Don't feel anything. (Or if you do--try not to make anyone else uncomfortable.)
Don't.
Don't.
Don't.

We can't stand the thought of losing babies--children.

IV

Mary Kelly's work (1983) explores the possibility of female fetishization of the child through babying him&her, saving things, having another one: she explores the fear of losing the child, through death, through rejection, through growing up (p. xvi). Kelly's Post-Partum Document is a co"ection that

historicizes&analyzes significant stages in the development of her son and in their relationship: she attempts to displace her potential "fetishization" onto the artwork. In psychoanalytic theory, the child is perceived by the mother to be the "phallus," her source of power in a world controlled by males, a world in which she is lacking, castrated. "The [mother desires] to remain the privileged Other of the pre-oedipal instance--in so far as the child's demands are the guarantee of her maternal femininity" (p. 109). She clings to the child as symbol of her worth, her value: there is a narcissistic desire for completion in the relationship between the two. The issue of reciprocal socialization is raised. Does the mother depend on the child for her definition of self as much as the child depends on the mother?

> The mother's negative place in the patriarchal order--more precisely the Symbolic--can be 'mis-recognised' because in a sense the child is the phallus for her. Until birth the child is part of the mother's body, and later comes to her as an object which was once part of herself. . . . Weaning from the breast is a significant discovery of absence not only for the child but also for the mother. In so far as it is a real separation, can be specularised, it does not provoke a 'recognition' of castration, but it does rupture the symbiosis of the biologically determined mother-child unit. (Kelly, 1983, p. 40)

August 21, 1988-The notion of depending on the role of mother for a sense of self is frightening. Is that why so many of my friends continue to have babies, why it sometimes seems such an attractive idea for me? This sheds a rather narcissistic light on the guilt I feel when I leave the kids to go to classes or meetings. My attachment to them is paranoic at times. I never thought of this before as being self-serving, of fulfilling my needs. I hate my guilt--and press on to do 'what I need to do,' wading through the feelings of selfishness that constantly surround me. Or is this guilt socially constructed, serving the interests of those who would prefer mothers to stay home . . .

Was She ever? Can She be?

V

Mom and Dad will be thrilled to see me, I thought as I opened the door to my parents' house. It'll be just me and them; we'll have a great chance to visit. I threw my running shoes down and called to them.

What are *you* doing here? Where are the kids, Mom asked.

At home, I grinned. I'm running in a race tomorrow.

Silence

What next? said my mother. This sounds like another excuse to take time away from the kids. How many other projects can you think up? She kept mumbling in disgust as she closed herself in the bathroom and started running a warm bath.

Is she going to keep this up or am I going to leave, I asked my dad. I won't feel guilty because I have my own interests. You've always encouraged us to do the things we want.

Don't upset your mother, my father said. (Since when did we have to be quiet so as not to upset someone?)

I went to bed but didn't sleep. This was the first time I had felt without the support of my parents. I was surprised that they weren't excited about my new adventure--and I was equally determined to run. I ruminated for many long hours about a mom who had sewn and helped us practice dancing, driven us to lessons, and encouraged us at school. Whether it was "right" or not, I knew that could never be me. I guessed my daughters had the misfortune of a selfish mother.

I left the house early, ran the race, and went home.

* * *

In confusing woman and mother, joining one to the other, society reassures itself as to its functioning, dismissing all the rest of woman, the rest of which she cannot make use of and which poses a direct threat to it. . . . The mother is a totality, an origine who lets herself be delimited and defined, who lets herself be monopolized also, contrary to the flowing woman who slides and escapes when he wants to seize her. . . . To privilege the maternal figure is to forget that behind the mother the woman never dies, and that mother and woman subsist in a difficult, often painful, coexistence, which attempts to reconcile in her, her woman's desire and her mother's desire. A difficult experience that our mothers have resolved by repressing the woman in them at the price of multiple neuroses that we, their children, have been able to see at work when in their universe, the possibility appeared to them suddenly--and for many, too late--that they could have lived otherwise. But we, their daughters, have decided to live otherwise, attempting this difficult juncture of woman and mother in us; decided that we are to experiment in ourselves all the possibilities of woman and mother, however contradictory they may be. (Feral, 1981, p.62)

VI

x p o

e s i

l o

n s

(dynamite)

my mind&body tingles with the exhilaration of accepting myself outside the boundaries the law a desire not based on lack, but on love a love that mothers know about one that is accepting of the other without sacrificing the self open, giving, willing to risk longing for connection (sometimes scaring others away) desire unfettered by guilt and the impulse to control not tight and rigid not leashed and still legitimate a frightening power felt resonating through the mind&body somewhere outside the 'real' world a cixousian elsewhere? lived only in flashes (clandestine) i begin to think that many (wo-men) will never understand

The notion of a desire based on love instead of lack calls into question some basic tenets of psychoanalysis. (She is a castrated he, lacking, jealous, desiring a child to fill her gap.) She turns her back on the mother to enter the symbolic realm of the father, only to find she can never go in the door but remains always on the threshold. An onlooker, definitely not one of the boys, not allowed in games with any stakes--not unless she never looks back at the mother or hears her call. A many faceted negative?
We here assume that female desire is the same as male desire, that there is no difference. Or maybe the story is unwritten, without words (in psychoanalytic discourse) . . .

> And what can we say about her, the daughter, who is alienated from this language in which she can never recognize herself as subject, who sees herself cut off from mother, who finds herself without a penis with which to identify with her father? In language, she is always spoken about, she, a stranger to the act of speech. Despairing of her case, she could try to imitate masculine speech. But with what risk does she undertake this circumnavigation, this pretense which distances her from her own body? (Dupré, 1984, p. 34)

So alienated, why would she want to return to the origin, to the mother?

what about a feminine desire based on love and acceptance of the mother, a never leavingness an acceptance of her sexed body, a connected motheranddaughter relationship that looks outward and disperses itself in all

that it touches a strength in dissolution (not disillusion) a positive, celebrating dissipation decentered selves?

how does this female desire relate to language?
is it the acceptance of a woman's body, a sexuality that is not centered, concentrated but dispersed and multiple a subjectivity that cannot be "re-presented" in the "neutral" male discouse which we speak, which speaks us different modes of languaging must be created, validated to communicate this desire.

> For Irigaray, the collapsing of woman into mother is itself a phallic reduction, necessitated by the male desire for origin/original desire. It all but obliterates woman as an autonomous sexual being whose sexuality when broached, is discussed in phallic terms, not in terms of our own experience and potentialities which she wishes to unearth from centuries of male projections and denials. (Gauthier, 1984, p. 45)

> Measuring her discourse with the grid of his own parameters--unicity, identity, linearity--he cannot decode her, decipher her, in other words, bring her back to that which he himself knows, to his own truth. Also, to accept her such as she is, he does not risk himself for fear that he should 'get lost,' forced as he would be to call himself into question, to redefine himself. . . . So, with forty centuries of history behind him, he chooses to do away with this strangeness which inhabits him and threatens him, by dismissing this difference which hinders him at the exterior of the system, at its margins, its fringes, certain thus to keep his place in the centre as the sole bearer of the logos, of knowledge, and of truth. (Feral, 1981, p. 60)

Stepping outside the limits that have been internalized, tentatively at first. The boundaries weary me, make me feel empty. Unlike Cinderella, the shoe never fits for very long, and I don't want to be carried somewhere for an everafter. (Cinderella was not as lucky as we thought.) To admit that there are limits and to conceive of other possibilities is to begin to validate what has always only been tiny, formless, (k)notwords--no matter how contradictory and big and effective and acceptable the words I defended myself with. Did they ever really belong to me?

VI

January 15, 1989-DON'T TELL ME that I don't have to fight to go to university and be a mom to two small children (among numerous other roles).
Where do you get the idea that you have to fight for this? We all support you. What you are fighting is inside yourself.
(She slams the door so hard that the mirror rattles. Did it crack? Break?)
I want to be a good mother and a good student. I am so frustrated trying to find the time to study and to write that all of this seems hopeless. I need time and space--uninvaded--so that I can think.
(Time to think? Is she crazy? She can't even take a shower without visitors. She is crying as she types. She doesn't work, realizes that she can't--won't--decide what is most important to her; Everything is at once. She even thinks it is unfair to have to choose. Maybe she is just a selfish, spoiled baby.)
We all go out early in the morning. I drive forty minutes to the university, work for two hours, and get home in time for lunch. The girls go to school for the afternoon so I write one page, and then it's time to tie skates for the kindergarten class. We come home and I write another page in between answering the doorbell nine times and finally sending snacks outside for the girls and the friends; it's supper/bath/story time. I try to understand two papers, and I'm too tired to think. I go to bed and remember that tomorrow I have meetings, assignments, roster responsibilities. . . . It's morning again. I spend half my time worrying, feeling guilty.
You don't use your time efficiently. Just close yourself in a room and work.
Okay. But someone is calling me and I don't want to say I don't have time for her. Why don't I just choose one of these roles and devote myself to it? I don't want to--I can't.

So many different subject positions beckon to us, conflict with one another, confuse us. I always thought that the power to control and transform my beliefs&behavior was inside me, have spent many hours castigating myself for being inconsistent and not disciplined enough to identify my values (for once and for all) and to consistently behave in accordance with them. I couldn't be an Ideal Self. I am afraid that believing in "subjectivity as a site of conflicting discourses" is a cop out of some kind; I feel unable to give mySelf up to it.

How do we break out of constructed re-presentation? How can we become critically literate in discourse?

Does a mother speak? In words? Can she ever?

VII

Epilogue-March 30, 1990-"M(other)ing" is an intense center of this work as a whole. I had to write through my guilt, come to terms with the strength of my being--as individual **and** as mother--or perhaps more generally as person in relation to others. In retrospect, I see the writing of this section as a pivotal point in my understanding, in my acceptance of a both&and way of knowing&being. I can be simultaneously **both** separate **and** connected: through this intense personal struggle, I have become more accepting of what seems to be paradox, the co-existence of "opposites."

fascinating the pull between wanting to be separate, an individual and wanting to be connected to others, to the universe as a whole i I have struggled with these two for many years.

I & i i & I

cherishing time&space where I am alone with my thoughts fighting for what I need to do as a person unwilling and somehow unable to be consumed by the needs and wants of others building walls to protect an inner sense of self a fighting stance silent shroud

and then . . . needing to be connected through the warmth of a living touch hugged enveloped in a sharingness one with all
i run down country roads and feel i am the world trees flowers mud flies birds expanse of air, sky, drifts of clouds renewing and revitalizing erasing boundaries of the body&mind&world

Reading Capra (1982) and Zukav (1979) has helped me to realize that we are all separate AND connected. Like subatomic phenomena that are sometimes

particles, sometimes waves, we exist in a dynamic flux between two states: self-assertion and integration with others, with the universe. Taoist philosophy helps us to see in a different way. How the two extremes pull back and forth--how one climaxes and recedes and the other takes over. Waves. Constant change. Rhythm.

> In the Chinese view, all manifestations of the Tao are generated by the dynamic interplay of these two archetypal poles [yin and yang], which are associated with many images of opposites taken from nature and from social life. It is important, and very difficult for us Westerners, to understand that these opposites do not belong to different categories but are extreme poles of a single whole. Nothing is only yin or only yang. All natural phenomena are manifestations of a continuous oscillation between the two poles, all transitions taking place gradually and in unbroken progression. The natural order is one of dynamic balance between yin and yang. (Capra, 1982, p. 35)

the pupil of the I

In classrooms that are entrapped in a curriculum that embodies the ideology of order and control, order does not emerge; it is imposed. It follows logically and phenomenologically that there can be little creativity in such settings. (Sawada, 1986, p. 5)

March 7, 1989-I dreamed I was in a science lab with a male teacher. On the table were various bottles of booze, packages of cigarettes, and different types of drugs. We chatted for a while, then he held up a tape measure. He asked me to stand against the wall and then measured how tall I was. "You're still too short," he announced and walked out of the room.

* * *

> To know oneself through an external image is to be defined through self-alienation. (Silverman, 1983, p. 158)

The imaginary wholeness, completeness and separateness that the subject perceives in the mirror stage and which she&he is always inadequate to attain functions as a basis for all further (imaginary) identifications. Silverman (1983) explains that, in the Lacanian scenario, various socially constructed roles are presented to the subject. Such ideal representations are fictional in the sense that they have no referents; terms such as "mother" and "father" derive meaning only from their opposition to each other. Actual fathers and mothers can never realize these ideal representations (p. 182). Familial subject positions as socially and ideally prescribed, however, function as a means of control in the sense that they channel the energies of subjects in particular directions; "the discourse of the family--a discourse which is absolutely central to the

perpetuation of the present, phallocentric symbolic order--needs subjects" (p. 182). The support for ideal representations of subject positions is not, then, found in actual people who can never fulfill them but is found, instead, in the discourse of social institutions such as the family and legal, medical, religious and educational systems (p. 184).

> Desire is directed toward ideal representations which remain forever beyond the subject's reach. (Silverman, 1983, p. 176)

* * *

Rosslyn Junior High School--Grade Seven (1969/70)

Language Arts	A+ 1	Excellent work; good citizen
Social Studies	A+ 2	Improved
Mathematics	A 1	Very good
Science	A+ 2	
Physical Education	E 1	
Instrumental Music	C+ 2	Attentive student; works well
Drama	A- 2	Excellent student
French	A+ 1	
Language Arts Option	E 1	I enjoyed having Susan as a student.

i turned my key in the lock and it exploded
pins and springs
losing themselves in the grass and dirt at my feet

all through the long night, lock unfixed, house unlocked i feel vulnerable
uneasy
open to the world
i muse at length

why do i want to be
Locked In?

> Our traditional programs in education are effective instruments of our authoritarian society and antithetical to the development of creativity. . . . They have been effective and efficient in producing quiet, orderly and courteous children, rather than flexible, sensitive and courageous individuals. (Vaughan, 1969, p. 230)

how is the learner, the teacher represented in educational discourse? what subject positions are offered? what have we learned as students? as teachers? as gendered students and teachers?

Much of the discourse related to education privileges that which can be observed and measured. The notion of a discoverable, transcendent, nameable reality lurks behind many practices and beliefs; the widespread enthusiasm for pedagogical models such as Madeline Hunter's Mastery Teaching is testimony to this phenomenon. Freer and Dawson write that the Hunter model "is joyfully recognized as truth by administrators and teachers afflicted with a pragmatic hunger for practical approaches" (1987, p. 68). Such models concentrate on right answers and focus on unilinear cause and effect relationships. The implicit assumption is that there is only one reality and that the teacher needs only to impart his&her knowledge of it to the students.

Here is Madeline speaking herself.

> Information constitutes the foundation for learning and thinking. Without information we can't think, make decisions, solve problems, or be creative. Once we have adequate information, we can proceed to build concepts, develop generalizations and do higher level thinking. . . . Because so much teaching is done by lecture, [we] will focus on that method of delivering information. Regardless of the content or message, adherence to three basic principles will enable you to give more information effectively. (Hunter, 1987, p. 33)

information inform

inform [a. OF. *enformer, -fourmer* (mod. F. *informer*), ad. L. *informare* to give form to, shape fashion, form an idea of, describe, f. *in* - . . . + *forma* FORM] (OED, 1969, p. 272)

in form de form con form

information shaping, describing A Reality unquestioned (what about multiple realities, differing perceptions, interpretations?)

Information constitutes the foundation for thinking and learning. Once we have adequate information, we can proceed to build concepts, develop generalizations, and do higher level thinking.

foundation build part + part + part

a long tradition of dualistic/mechanistic thought

clean divisions distinct categories mind/matter

The modern, scientific world view handed down through Aristotle, Descartes, Newton, and others is one in which nature is separate, independently functioning and thereby objectively observable by humans. It can be analyzed into its constituent parts, its building blocks. From the building blocks, relationships of cause and effect can be ascertained. An apt metaphor is that of the machine. It is a world view that favors objective detachment and rationality or linear reasoning, a closed view in which everything is reduced to a model within the grasp of human comprehension, manipulation, and control.

> Newton is the author of the modernist paradigm; it is his world-view Kant used for absolute categories, logical positivists for their epistemology, behaviorists for their psychology, and mainstream curricularists continue to use as a rationale for their designs. To understand mastery learning, behavioral objectives, competency based education, or the Tyler rationale it is necessary to understand Newton's world-view . . . linear, atomistic, uniform, totally predictable, organized like a clock. (Doll, 1988, pp. 3,5)

learning proceeds in a linear fashion it is built step by step towards higher learning learning is arranged hierarchically
and information is its foundation

(what is the "unspoken opposite" of linearity, step by step building, analyzable ORDER? how about interrelatedness, complex webs, apparent CHAOS? why is linearity privileged in this text? why is complexity marginalized?)

> Where the computer essentially works along just one sequence at a time, the brain processes along thousands, even millions, simultaneously. It deals not with "hard" step-by-step logic (such as one uses in applying an arithmetic procedure) but by perceiving *patterns*. (Hart, 1978, p. 394)

Developments in quantum physics over the past sixty years have forced scientists, philosophers, and thinkers in all fields to question the veracity of such a view. At the smallest subatomic level, phenomena have qualities of particles and waves, albeit not at the same time. No consistent identity can be determined. The observer is integrally linked to what she&he sees through the types of questions that guide the experiments and the methods used to conduct them. There is no observation without the observer, no sterile objectivity. (Zukav, 1979, p. 56)

> Modern quantum scientists no longer search for the ultimate particle. Instead, the emphasis is on structure, process, and interaction between a number of elementary particles and processes that may well be infinite. Modern scientific method is based on the search for unity among events, conditions, and phenomena rather than analysis, isolation, reduction, and quantification. . . . A more consistent quantum view of the science of teaching and learning would reveal a complicated web: an infinite number of interactions between learning probabilities, teaching processes, and environmental conditions. (Costa, 1984, p. 198)

Because so much teaching is done by lecture . . .

> The lecture was a late medieval invention instituted because books were scarce. The lecture was originally a reading (*lectito, lectere*); one **man**

> [emphasis added] reading aloud could make a whole book accessible. Why has it survived among the literate of the post-Gutenberg era? Surely the lecture requires reinvention. (Berthoff, 1987, p. xxi)

we will focus on that method of delivering information

delivering information de live in form (intact in tact not touched, untouchable)

information can be delivered from one to another an object, a commodity that some possess (others don't)
it is objective, universal a given that is needed to proceed to higher levels of thinking (where the giver already is)
teacher/learner separation (teacher is privileged)
what the learner knows is disregarded, what the teacher knows, gives is a foundation for the learner to develop

> "Masters," in general, try to really obtain an increase in value from mastery, a feeling of accrued superiority, an inflated narcissism. . . . (Cixous & Clement, 1986, p. 144)

the pupil of the I . . .
what is the image of ideal student that eye&I assimilate from the teacher what is the image of ideal teacher that eye&I assimilate from students, parents, administrators . . . i see myself in their eyes what image is reflected (the mirror again? Irigaray counters the mirror with a speculum, an instrument that allows one to "see" within? (1985, pp. 144-149) . . . is there any "within" that is not socially constructed . . . that can be reread&rewritten?) what institutions are maintained intact when we constantly desire what we can never attain? what human potential denied?

not just <u>what</u> is said in the discourse of education but <u>how</u> it is said (that is partly why i play with language) what are the relations between who speaks, who is spoken to, and who or what is spoken about
(Madeline entitles one chapter of <u>Mastery Teaching</u> "Increasing *<u>Their</u>* Motivation" [emphasis added])

* * *

When teacher-student roles are clearly defined and the teacher retains an aura of control, the learner is not intended to be flexible, sensitive, or courageous. He&she is "seen neither as problematic nor as a particularily dynamic element in the system; the real task of the educator arises in organizing the material sometime before the learner ever enters the classroom" (Eisner and Vallance, 1976, p. 8). The teacher makes the learning decisions--and the learner adapts to whatever has been planned. Freire's banking concept of education places the teacher at the center of the process--depositing information into empty students. "The capacity of banking education to minimize or annul the students' creative power and to stimulate their credulity serves the interests of the oppressors, who care neither to have the world revealed nor to see it transformed" (Freire, 1972, p. 47). Everyone is Locked In.

February 23, 1988-I have so many misgivings about working with student teachers. I feel like a hypocritical bitch, and I don't want to be a judge. Who am I to say what is good teaching--more than that I don't believe I know myself. I am fully aware of what works in the classroom--I am a past master--and can be "effective" in terms of classroom management and ensuring that students are "on task" as the teacher decides. I feel chilled when I watch a high school class that is "in control"--simply because nobody cares enough to do anything, stone-faced tolerance and apathy. All I am doing is propagating more of the same by helping the student teachers be "effective" and yet if I don't suggest management techniques and planning hints then I am not helping them to "succeed" in the system. Is the role of the university to maintain the institutions of society intact--not to initiate change? I am thinking now of Smith's remarks about education . . . "Faculties of education are concerned with training and distribution of knowledge, skills, and the forms of thought. Though innovative work is done in educational theory and practice, it is innovative as a means of transmitting a substance which originates elsewhere" (1975, pp. 361-362).

December, 87-I am furious, livid. Our prof handed back our papers without assigning them marks. Fine, if he doesn't want to give us number grades, but I

think we should get some kind of feedback *as to whether or not we are on the right track*. He attached a list of further questions to answer; well, I'm NOT doing any more work in a vacuum!

December, 1987-My daughter is in grade one. I mentioned to her that she would be getting a report card today and she said, "What is that?" I explained that it was a booklet in which the teacher wrote about how she did at school. "In *her* opinion," Casey snorted, "In *my* opinion, I do very well. That's important, isn't it?"

> The student's biggest problem was a slave mentality which had been built into him by years of carrot-and-whip grading, a mule mentality which said, "If you don't whip me, I won't work." (Pirsig, 1985, p. 175)

* * *

November, 1989
What's the matter, Erin?
I'm one of the only kids in the class who hasn't been chosen as the quietest yet.
So what. Is it good to be quiet?
Well, the teacher gives you a sticker.

* * *

What happens when the subject re-cognizes the exteriority of ideal representations, realizes that such representations are socially, historically, contextually constructed, that they serve the interests of maintaining society intact and are transformable? She&he can never entirely outlive the influence of these subject positions, but can she&he relocate them, place them to the side instead of directly (directing) in front of him&her?

when i envision an ideal representation directly in front of me and desire to reach it (the desire that cannot be fulfilled), the space between me and the image is one of lack and inadequacy . . . a directed, ordered space

when i envision the ideal representation to the side of me, i am aware of its power and influence but i am not as completely bound to it a space opens up in front of me an open space of possibility, potential . . . chaos?

or maybe

instead of a mirror that reflects its image to me, a looking glass that i can walk through to . . .

* * *

> The study of chaos has been motivated, in part, by the discovery in chemical systems of unexpected patterns in situations of turbulence. . . . The theory of dissipative structures . . . suggests that as the given order dissipates, new structure emerges. . . . [It] suggests that
>
> 1. Turbulence (chaos or fluctuation) is not only disorder or noise; it also embodies in latent form the very information of creation.
> 2. An open system must be far-from-equilibrium with its context for new order to spontaneously emerge.
> 3. Open systems are characterized by diversity and heterogeneity; that is, they are rich in information because they are free to vary.
> 4. Imposing order constrains diversity (information) and limits autonomy and freedom, forcing the system back to equilibrium.
> 5. Information is the energy that drives open systems, communication is the processing of this energy, and participation in the process of communication is the actualization of information in these systems.
>
> (Sawada, 1986, pp. 5,6)

order
imposing limits on incomprehensibility
arbitrary
secure
(refutable)
and

chaos
frightening
open
limitless

chaos&order as inseparable
structure in process
rhythm
natural
(not imposed)
silent moving
unheard
but felt

listen in(g) the spaces

* * *

being critical of the order, the structure viewing it as in process arbitrary and created open to the world and its possibilities (being comfortable in an unlocked house) through trusting relationships with other learners risking, releasing creative powers

> The truly creative individual stands ready to abandon old classifications and to acknowledge that life, particular
> ly his own unique life, is rich with possibilities. To him, disorder offers the potentiality of order. (Barron, 1958, p. 164)

Various writers (Ferguson, 1980; Freire, 1972; Kohl, 1969; Krishnamurti, 1974; Suransky, 1980) have explored a more dialogical teacher-learner relationship--an interaction with the world in which both parties are constantly learning, experimenting and changing. These people would disagree with Hunter that "it is pedagogical folly to follow, in the name of creativity, each possibility that emerges or to engage in a series of free associations that lead nowhere except perhaps to confusion" (1984, p. 177). To them, such opportunities may provide fertile grounds for transformation and growth in autonomy. Freire (1972, p. 56)

says that "problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality." The teacher and learner share critical thoughts about their perceived realities as first steps in transformation. The teacher is a participant and guide in the learning process, not the controller.

> The learner is an active creative being who needs to be helped to develop a critical consciousness toward reality. Reality is a social construction, and it is through reflection on the given, critical questioning and radical action that the process of conscientization takes place. There is a continual movement, a dynamism of interaction between the learner and the teacher which is aimed at transformation, not maintenance of the participant's world. (Suransky, 1980, p. 175)

Whitson (1987) notes that "a curriculum that promotes intellectual competence will include conflicting voices providing opportunities for critical reflection on the pragmatic meaning of language in use" (p. 24). Through varied experiences with discourses, we may begin to share differing re-presentations of realities, thereby thinking about them in new ways. Whitson draws on writers such as Freire and explores the importance of a dialogical student-teacher relationship, one that can enhance critical abilities through the shared examination of differences encountered through language (symbols) in use.

* * *

Benjamin (1986) theorizes intersubjectivity, female desire that conceptualizes a different relationship between self and other. She notes that phallic desire is characterized by separation, that it is initiated by the mirror stage which emphasizes separateness. Also, the subject must separate from the mother, deny his&her first love object, in order to enter the symbolic and, in the case of the son, identify with the father, and, in the case of the daughter, be denied identification with the father, except in a passive sense. She notes that phallic desire and power *over* are one (p. 81); such a desire requires domination of the other.

> Since the child continues to need the mother, since the man continues to need woman, the absolute assertion of independence requires possessing and controlling the needed object. (Benjamin, 1986, p. 80).

> Since others will be loved only if they are believed capable of completing the subject, desire must be understood as fundamentally narcissistic. (Silverman, 1983, p. 177)

> The intention is not to do without her but to make sure that her alien otherness is either assimilated or controlled, that her own subjectivity nowhere asserts itself in a way that make his dependency upon her a conscious insult to his sense of freedom. (Benjamin, 1986, p. 80)

Female desire, then, is a different mode of being-with-the-other that respects the subjectivity of both. It facilitates a safe, creative journey *within* , a self-discovery simultaneous with acceptance of the other as actual subject, existing independent of one's fantasies about him&her. "Inner space" metaphorizes the fullness of the place within where the self is recognized as well as space that extends outward and connects with the other. Greater clarity of self is experienced in the presence of the other. Intersubjectivity as desire, then, includes both individuality and connectedness, paradoxically both at the same time. (Benjamin, 1986, pp. 92-98)

Can Benjamin's intersubjectivity give us clues about different student&teacher relationships, the basis of a(different)pedagogy? Respect for the self and for the other, the space between the two as providing mutual clarification of his&her own subjectivity, a space not based on power of one *over* the other but based on power of both *to* .....

Marie (Seeseasi & Marie, 1990), a twelve year old girl, discusses teachers and teaching.

> Sheena was having a hard time the last part of the year. The teachers would give her the answers. They were trying to move her up to their power. But she has her own power to move up if she wants to. You are the one who is supposed to bring it up, and Sheena needs to discover her

> own power, not theirs. Each one of us needs to discover our own power and talents. (p. 2)

the pupil of the I?

Feminist pedagogy seeks to reconceptualize student&teacher relationships, to rethink the authoritarian role of the teacher in patriarchal society; the teacher as the "person who knows the material and the answers" is de-centred (Ryan, 1989, p. 40). Students are helped in their journey towards dis-covering and celebrating their own powers, towards validating their own subjectivity from within. Ryan notes that feminist pedagogy emphasizes interaction through discussion and encourages the examination of personal experience as it relates to the course and beyond (1989, p. 40). Caywood & Overing's collection of essays (1987) explore the interface of feminist pedagogy and English education, particularily the teaching of writing. Dominant themes include the need for validating personal uses of language as well as for facilitating and honoring writing as process instead of product. English educators have, for many years, espoused pedagogical methods which are student-centred, which include personal response to literature and promote acceptance of writing as process: the exploration of reading and writing as processes of creating meaning are integral to the teaching&learning of Language Arts (Britton et al, 1975; Elbow, 1973, 1981; Grant, 1984; Graves & Hanson, 1988; Iveson, 1988; Moffett & Wagner, 1983; Rosenblatt, 1982). Research in the area of student&teacher collaboration in the grading of Language Arts promises greater student involvement in the re-presentation of him&her self as a learning being (Hart & Smith, 1989/1990). Learning&teaching is regarded as an interactive process; we are all at once learners&teachers in differing degrees.

* * *

spaces learning spaces teaching spaces learning
rhythm learning rhythm
breathing bodythought
felt not pre scribed
what sounds and feels right

being&knowing

escaping disrupting
creatively
in multi-dimensional spaces that
desire

abundance
possibility . . .

writing in the dark

The
original sin is to
limit the Is.

Don't.

(Bach, 1977, p. 128)

writing in the dark
i have to trust
myself
listen to the rhythm
within
i cannot see the
lines on the pages
and so
create my own

i unlearn fear

in the dark
uncluttered by illusions of Reality
the distinctions of day
i feel lucid
mysteriously connected

but
free
to write the text of my being
and read it without
seeing

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